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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

Special Study No. 4

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SOVIET MILITARY INTENTIONS

18 September 1946

1. Since the publication of Special Study No. 3 on 24 August 1946 on the possibility of early Soviet military aggression there have been additional reports suggesting the imminence of such action. The most notable of them are:

a. That MVD chiefs from Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, and the French, British, and U.S. Zones in Germany, meeting at Brussels on 25 August, were directed to disrupt industrial activity in their respective areas through sabotage, strikes, and disorders, in preparation for "military action in the months to come."

b. That Stalin, on 2 September, issued an order discontinuing Soviet demobilization and directing that personnel in process of demobilization return to their units.

c. That Albanian, Yugoslav, and Bulgarian troops have been concentrated on the Greek frontier.

d. That the Soviets intend to seize Istanbul by force on the night of 18-19 September.

2. Each of these reports may be explained on other grounds than the imminence of aggressive Soviet military operations.

a. The first evidently refers to future, and perhaps hypothetical, Soviet military action. The fact that the strikes and disorders have not yet occurred would indicate that the action referred to is at least not imminent.

b. It has long been anticipated that Soviet demobilization would be discontinued on the completion of its third stage about 1 September. The only disturbing aspect of the report is the reference to the recall of men in process of demobilization. The report is from an unsure source; it is possible that the alarmist element was introduced in its

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transmission. In any event, the report in itself is an indication of preparedness rather than of imminent aggression.

c. Albanian, Yugoslav, and Bulgarian concentrations on the Greek frontier are accepted, but they are not on such a scale as to indicate imminent overt aggression. There are indications that the Albanian dispositions, in particular, are defensive in character. The Soviets could not press their charges against Greece before the United Nations if these countries made no show of fearing Greek "aggression."

d. The report of Soviet intention to seize Istanbul tonight is from an extremely indirect and doubtful source. It is unsupported by any evidence of necessary preparation for such an attack, and it is probably another item in the war of nerves on Turkey.

3. On general grounds it is considered unlikely that the Soviet Union would resort to overt military aggression in the near future. This does not exclude, however, a resort to force by local elements under Soviet control in any propitious local situation. The Soviet Union might seek a favorable solution in Greece by such means at any time that it saw a fair prospect of keeping the conflict localized. It has already warned that Greece is a menace to peace. It is capable of precipitating civil war there. The ensuing disorder would afford to Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria an opportunity and a pretext for intervention in some degree in "self-defense," without the USSR itself becoming militarily involved. The Soviet Union would, however, act in the political sphere, and particularly in the Security Council, to prevent effective support of the Greek Government, possibly citing as a precedent the non-intervention policy followed during the Spanish Civil War. In such circumstances, however, the USSR would maintain its forces in readiness to cope with any Anglo-American reaction.

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